PPB _73-1123___

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Bob:

Subject: Records Management

    Per your request, some thoughts stemming from your meeting of 22 Aug 73
concerning the Records Management issue:

    1. How does the notion of trying to manage records arise? Apparently,
because records are generated in great volume at great expense, move through
their active lives using up large amounts of manpower and space, and finally
come to rest in inactive storage which again has major costs associated with it.

    2. Records are thoughts in physical form. In a way, the difficulty of
controlling the creation and use of records is comparable to trying to control
the thoughts of an organization. I know that Records Management doctrine is
intended to cover the record from creation through its active life to archival
storage or destruction. In practice, however, records management has found
its principal effectiveness limited to inactive or archival storage... in spite of
the determined efforts of earnest people over the years. Somehow, it has proved
very up-hill for Records Management programs to impact significantly on records
generation or the active life of records. There must be a reason for this.

    3. Records are the molecules of an organization. Intuitively, it's a very
forbidding prospect to manage a pervasive aspect of an organization by under-
taking to manage the molecules of that organization. It is like trying to manage
a building by giving attention to its bricks. Organizations do not enjoy such
exquisite degree of control... in records or anything else. Perhaps this explains
why Records Management, concentrating as it does on records, has been relatively
ineffective in its efforts to "manage" the creation of records and the active life of
records.

        (What we should manage, it would seem, are the plans,
        programs, projects, and people in an organization...
        but not the records as such which are generated by these
        plans, programs, projects, and people. And managing

the Agency's plans, programs, projects, and people is
the function of the supervisory system of the Agency.
Efforts at strong management of a pervasive aspect of
Agency activity like records from some central body
would be in some way in conflict with the Agency's
supervisory structure and would appear certain to
cause confusion and achieve little good.)

4. Given the thesis that it really isn't feasible to control costs in an organization by attempting to "manage" records as such throughout the Agency (except archival records), it would appear that whatever wisdom or restraint we employ in generating and using records must become an inherent part of the normal work habits of all employees throughout the Agency. This, in turn, would suggest that what is needed from some central body (small staff) in the Agency is a few practical rules which can be followed by all of us in the paper world in which we work... together with widespread training in those rules. Such rules (they must be easily do-able) and compliance with them may achieve the lion's share of all we can hope to achieve in the way of "management" over active records. If so, we should avoid ponderous central mechanisms or a large body of people straining at the full doctrine of records management.

5. The above leads me to these notions:

   a. We do not need a large central body of people attempting
to "manage" records. (Won't work.)

   b. We do not need elaborate and complex mechanisms
imposed on the line command aimed at records management.
(Cost more than it will achieve.)

   c. We do need a few simple, practical rules... (and we
need to implant these rules in the daily habits of our people
through training)... which will guide each and every one of
us towards more desirable practices as regards records
creation and usage. (Should work.)

6. Another line of thought: In terms of Agency-level organs, it seems to me we have too many. We have the Records Management Board, the Information Processing Board, the R&D Board, the Contract Review Committee, etc. The same individual often serves on more than one of these bodies.

Last year, I proposed that the IP Board be upgraded in membership to the Assistant Deputy Director level. This was done. Part of my rationale in so doing was to move us towards a body senior enough to establish policy and make many decisions in the Information Processing area and, potentially, in other areas of management concern as well. That is, I felt (and still feel) that a Board at the ADD level could properly and effectively support the DCI and the CIA Management Committee in the planning, policy generation, and decision making required in running the Agency.

Such a Board would need staff support. And it might be that small staffs specializing in such areas as Records Management, Information Processing, R&D, and Contract Review would be needed. However, these staffs should be kept small. Easy coordination among these staffs would also be a requirement-- a factor which might argue for organizational co-location of these staffs.

7. My basic point on Agency-level staffs is that we should avoid establishing large central staffs with ambitious charters which inevitably run counter to the lines of authority by which the Agency's day-to-day operations are managed.

8. One last gasp: After the Records Management issue has been thought through a little more, I think we will want to sit down and consider what mix of Agency-level staffs and Boards CIA really needs.

Chuck

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DD/M&S __73-3582__

OJCS-1090-73
6 September 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director of Management
                 and Services

FROM   : [   ] SED/OJCS   STAT

SUBJECT   : Thoughts Concerning Questions Raised at
                   the 3:30 PM "Records Management"
                   Meeting of 22 August 1973

REFERENCES   : Your oral request that we formalize
                   our views on the subject

A. Question:

     Is there an Agency problem concerning the collection,
storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information?

     Answer:

     My feeling is that there has to be a problem --
rather, problems -- if only because of the combination
of two factors, among others:

     1. The four-headed organizational structure of
     the Agency -- referred to in the meeting as "the
     Confederation of Four". It is difficult to coordi-
     nate the information processing affairs of four
     nearly autonomous organizations so as to avoid
     duplication, and inconsistent systems.

     2. Constant advances and change in information
     technology. The benefits of this new technology
     should be available uniformly to all elements of
     the Agency and would help provide:

a. More efficient and timely methods of information processing.

b. More effective collection, storage and retrieval of information.

c. Standardization of information processing methods without unduly sacrificing flexibility.

B. An approach:

Establish an Agency-wide organization (or extend the charter of existing organizations) whose function would be to provide technical assistance to Agency groups who desire to use information processing technology to assist in solving their problems. But avoid the "slow-death-for-lack-of-a real-live-problem-to-work-on" situation by giving this organization an agency-wide mandate to establish or improve particular information systems. This makes the organization more a "line" organization than a "staff" organization and provides the "organizational focus" (Climenson) to get the job done.

This organization should emphasize the conduct of cost/benefit studies in selecting information processing techniques appropriate to particular problems and situations. Change must be evolutionary and with the full support of the group(s) affected by the change. Pilot efforts are to be encouraged and their findings disseminated widely.

C. "Non-approaches"

Lengthy studies culminating in equally lengthy reports are notoriously unsuccessful in producing results (like Presidential Commissions). Pure staff organizations are usually weak and thresh around ineffectively.

STAT

System Engineering Division, OJCS

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AGENCY INFORMATION HANDLING PROBLEMS

Hypothesis

1. It is hypothesized that there is an information processing problem within the Agency, at least as far as the production analyst shops are concerned. By "problem" is meant: present day technology is not being used to a significant extent--even at the present dollar resource level.

2. It is hypothesized further that there is a significant difference between the approach to data processing in support of such activities as payroll, inventory control, trajectory analysis, mensuration, etc., and the approach to information processing in support of the intelligence information needs of production analysts. The former is characterized by relatively fixed data, computational requirements, and reporting formats; the latter is characterized

by the high volume of narrative textual information
any piece of which will have different uses to dif-
ferent analysts, and all of which is subject to severe
semantic-ambiguity problems that must be considered
when processed by computer. (For example, the word
"strike" means one thing when coordinated with a term
that represents the concept "labor;" and it means
another when coordinated with a term that represents
the concept "aircraft" or "target.")

Why Is There A Problem?

3.   There are two major reasons. First, there
is no central management of the Agency's information
handling systems. Presently, individual offices are
free to develop information handling projects that
may cost significant resources and offer relatively
narrow applications if successful, and possibly dup-
licating to some extent the work of other offices.
As example, we see CRS's MAD (Machine-Assisted
Dissemination) project developed at a cost of over

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$200,000 and several man years' effort only to have the decision made to replace it with another office's development; no action had been taken to have the MAD development made part of the big picture. Thus too, we see the CRS computer center, after many years in the making, closed and its operations consolidated with OJCS. This was accomplished without any meaningful study of the potential benefits of a central computer facility to support intelligence information processing.

4. Secondly, the overall systems analysis capability within the Agency is spread very thin over the many offices. Not only are they thin, but many are given the title without the benefits of any real training or background; as though the title somehow took care of that. Many computer systems analysts exist in OJCS where naturally enough their emphasis will be to seek EDP solutions to each problem. Presently, production analysts do not know where to get advice on their information handling problems.

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How To Improve The Situation?

5.   How to improve? Create a systems analysis staff
under the DCI. This staff would review the information
handling procedures being used within the Agency and would
give special attention to the information handling
development projects that are underway. The staff would
determine the extent to which centralization of the
information handling function makes sense. For example,
perhaps all major development work should take place
within the DDM&S; perhaps each directorate should have
a systems staff that would coordinate its activities
with the DCI's staff.

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